

The Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies Appropriations (T-HUD) bill touches almost every aspect of American life. Regardless of where we live, work, and play we all need housing and transportation options that are safe, secure, and sustainable. Additionally, thousands of Americans need the jobs that only a fully funded and intelligent T-HUD bill will support.

While I am heartened that this bill increases support from last year for Community Development Block Grants and assistance to homeless veterans, more still needs to be done. I also have concerns about many of the funding levels in the bill, particularly the low funding levels for Homelessness Assistance grants, housing counseling, and Small Starts and New Starts transit investment programs. I am also seriously concerned about the lack of TIGER funding. TIGER is the most popular Department of Transportation grant program, which faces a demand 400 times greater than supply of funds, and which jumpstarts critical transportation projects across the country. At a time when it is more important than ever to put Americans back to work, we should be taking advantage of every opportunity we have to rebuild and renew our communities, create American jobs, and support American businesses.

As the Chairman of the Livable Communities Task Force, I am deeply disappointed that the legislation prohibits funding to the Sustainable Communities Partnership. These partnerships help communities build transit-oriented developments, expand location-efficient housing, and develop alternative transportation networks. Republican efforts to block this funding are a short-sighted mistake, which I strongly oppose.

I am aware that we live in an unsure fiscal climate, and that belts are being tightened. However, investing in Sustainable Community Partnerships will not only help strengthen communities, but will increase the efficiency of government by reducing red tape, foster wise use of taxpayer dollars by coordinating efforts between agencies, and prevent unnecessary spending. These partnerships, together with other programs that allow local decision-making over investment decisions, help make our communities safer, healthier, and more economically secure. I reject the Republican failure to support these programs and I oppose this legislation.

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